For Devan Radecki, First Place is more than just a project she's been focused on for close to two decades. It represents another idea born independent for her 31-year-old son, Elliot, who lives with autism.

After more than 10 years of research, an evaluation of more than 180 public and private buildings, and numerous model building projects, First Place had emerged as a community of best practices for systems designed to accommodate people with autism and other special needs, in order to help individuals live more independent lives.

The concept behind the innovation is the First Place Transition Academy for students. First Place remodeled existing housing for adults with autism and other special needs. The First Place Town Center in Southfield, Michigan, opened on Monday.

"It's been a dream of mine since about 2009," said Radecki. "I was born with this idea, and I've been working on it continuously since then."

The first full open house was Saturday, June 11 at 1 p.m. for interested in learning more about the program.

In late April, the first facility moved into 2220 Ponte Apartments in Birmingham, Southfield. The new apartments, owned by the Transition for Special Living, offer a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment on the main floor.

"We're excited about the opportunity to support residents with autism and other special abilities and how we can approach community development, which includes training individuals for registration, nutrition and employment," Radecki said.

The new year, independent model First Place Transition Academy operated by SABRE, will take 32 students currently and will be able to transition to more than 100 students in the next five years. In this academy, students are exposed to a simulation of real-life situations, including grocery shopping, navigating public transportation, managing money, cooking on independent diets, working during the school day, and participating in a variety of social activities.

"I think it's important to get people thinking about the independent student," Radecki said. "We want them to know that there are options.

"We want children to get their education, and we want them to be comfortable with the idea of being independent, which means being out and about being independent, which means being out and about being independent, which means being out and about being independent, which means being out and about being independent, which means being out and about being independent."

For more information, visit the school’s website at www.firstplacetowncenter.com or call 248-370-6444.

First Place is a branch of the concept of "inclusive living" in business, real estate, medicine and research that has come together to provide a new perspective of quality living for individuals with autism and other special abilities, according to Radecki.

"We want to make sure that we are all about building a social network for them, especially in a community that offers that," Radecki said.

The vision for First Place Town Center is to create a community of students that will be able to transition to First Place Transition Academy, which includes all curriculum and real-life experiences that are available in the community, according to Radecki.

"We want them to know that they have options," Radecki said. "We want them to feel comfortable and be able to live independently."